

# Terms of Reference - Drains Action Working Group – Sept./07

Improved drainage is fundamental in much of Ontario and most rural municipalities. Since these drainage improvements can result in modifications to existing watercourses, they can result in issues or conflicts with the requirements of the *Fisheries Act* and the *Drainage Act*. The Drains Action Working Group has been established to deal with these issues.

## ***Common Goal:***

All members of the Working Group recognize and respect the need for improved drainage in rural Ontario, as provided through the *Drainage Act*. All members of the Working Group recognize and respect the importance of fish and fish habitat and acknowledge the protection of these resources through the *Fisheries Act*. It is the goal of the Working Group to protect fish and fish habitat in municipal drains without diminishing the need for improved drainage in Ontario.

## ***Purpose of the Drains Action Working Group***

The Drains Action Working Group shall:

- Clarify and develop clear policy direction on issues between drainage and fish habitat.
- Ensure that the Guidance Document “Agricultural Drain Maintenance in Southern Ontario – Guidance to Meeting the Requirements of the *Fisheries Act*” remains current and is adhered to.
- Provide an informal sounding board on specific drainage and fish habitat related projects, as brought forward by Group members. If able, the Group will provide a mediation role and/or recommendations on projects.
- Initiate and organize training and education, as required.
- Investigate, promote the establishment of, and communicate funding opportunities to establish a leading environmental enhancement stewardship role on municipal drains.
- Encourage the development of Operational Statements for municipal drain maintenance activities not requiring a Fisheries Act authorization.
- Develop a Guidance Document for the application of the Fisheries Act to municipal drain construction or improvement projects.

## ***Representation***

The Drains Action Working Group includes representatives from the agricultural and the fish habitat management sectors. Representation has been limited to a manageable number for practical reasons.

Representatives are as follows:

Ontario Federation of Agriculture - 1  
Drainage Superintendents Association of Ontario – 2  
OSPE Land Drainage Committee - 1  
Fisheries and Oceans Canada - 2  
Conservation Authorities – 1  
Association of Municipalities of Ontario – Rural Caucus - 1  
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs - 1

## ***Meetings***

It is anticipated that the Drains Action Working Group will meet in the southwestern Ontario (London) area approximately three to four times per year. Depending on the amount of information on the agenda, the meetings should be about ½ day in length. Decision-making will be conducted on a consensus basis. A chair and vice chair will be selected by the Working Group. There is no remuneration provided to Working Group members for attendance at meetings.